

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 78

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 87

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 78—Relative to high-occupancy vehicle lanes.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 8, 1998.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 78, Rainey. High-occupancy vehicle lanes: study.

This measure would request the Department of Transportation, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and the Department of the California Highway Patrol to jointly conduct a study of a specified demonstration project involving a new high-occupancy vehicle lane on Interstate 80 and would require the Department of Transportation to make available to the public copies of the completed study. The bill also would request the departments, in consultation with regional transportation agencies, to develop statewide criteria and guidelines upon which to base future decisions involving HOV lanes and to develop a specified standardized review process.

WHEREAS, Interstate 80 between the Carquinez Bridge and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge is a vital transportation corridor and is the most congested freeway in the Bay Area; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Transportation has added a new high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane to alleviate the congestion in order to promote the welfare, safety, and convenience of motorists; and

WHEREAS, Certain cities along the Interstate 80 corridor threatened litigation to prevent this freeway-widening project from proceeding and demanded certain concessions in order to drop the threat of this lawsuit; and

WHEREAS, One of these concessions was to create a “demonstration project” that would restrict the use of the west-bound segment of the new HOV lane, between the Distribution Center and the Richmond Parkway, to vehicles with three or more persons during the hours of 5 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and

WHEREAS, This concession has resulted in this HOV lane having the longest and most restrictive hours of operation in the Bay Area; and

WHEREAS, All other Bay Area HOV lanes are restricted to use by carpoolers during peak congestion hours only; and

WHEREAS, Most other Bay Area HOV lanes may be used by vehicles with two or more persons; and

WHEREAS, The public has expressed confusion over the discrepancies and inconsistencies of the Interstate 80 HOV lane's hours of operation and the required number of occupants for each vehicle; and

WHEREAS, The Department of the California Highway Patrol is concerned about the safety risks these confusions may cause; and

WHEREAS, Bay Area courts have expressed concern over the inconsistency of HOV lanes, and have indicated that they may dismiss HOV-lane citations if the inconsistencies are shown to cause confusion for motorists; and

WHEREAS, The justification for this demonstration project is not based on any established criteria, extensive research, or scientific data; and it has not been effectively demonstrated that operating HOV lanes during noncommute hours encourages carpooling or reduces congestion; and

WHEREAS, The demonstration project assurances adopted by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission state that the project shall continue for a period of 18 months, unless the operation demonstrates that the operational integrity is seriously impaired; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Department of Transportation, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and the Department of the California Highway Patrol are hereby requested to jointly conduct a thorough and comprehensive study of the demonstration project, to be completed as soon as feasible, but not later than July 1, 1998 ; and be it further

Resolved, That the study analyze the usage of the new HOV lane and consider whether the restrictions significantly change behavior and encourage carpooling during both commute and noncommute hours; and be it further

Resolved, That in weighing the costs of the demonstration project, the study consider the possible confusion to motorists of having a widely disparate number of hours of operation for the HOV lane under this demonstration project compared to other HOV lanes in the Bay Area; the possible confusion to motorists of having disparate requirements for the number of people per vehicle compared to most HOV lanes in the Bay Area; the risk that confusion and inconsistency may undermine the public's acceptance of HOV lanes; the appropriateness of enacting longer HOV-lane hours without established criteria or extensive research; and the enforcement and safety concerns raised by the Department of the California Highway Patrol; and be it further

Resolved, That in weighing the benefits of the demonstration project, the study consider the travel-time savings and reductions in congestion of the corridor for both commute and noncommute hours; and be it further

Resolved, That the demonstration project be terminated immediately if the report concludes that its costs outweigh its benefits; and be it further

Resolved, That the Department of Transportation make available to the public copies of the study; and be it further

Resolved, That in order to promote statewide consistency and to reduce confusion and safety risks to motorists, the Department of Transportation and the Department of the California Highway Patrol, in consultation with regional transportation agencies, are hereby requested to develop statewide criteria and guidelines upon which to base future decisions concerning the addition of, and operation hours of, HOV lanes; and be it further

Resolved, That the Department of Transportation and the Department of the California Highway Patrol, in consultation with regional transportation agencies, are hereby requested to develop a standardized review process to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of each HOV lane in the state in order to assess whether the lane's objectives are being realized and to make appropriate changes; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the Director of Transportation, the Commissioner of the Department of the California Highway Patrol, and the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

